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STORIES

THE PROMOTION OF MR. PROUT

ALLAN PHILLIPS

POETRY

FIVE POEMS

LOUIS DUDEK

I HAVE CONFUSED THE FEELING

COLLEEN THIBAUDEAU

FILM

ON FILM CRITICISM AND ON TWO RECENT CANADIAN FILMS

GUY GLOVER

PAINTING

LOUIS MUHLSTOCK

ROBERT AYRE

FOUR PAINTINGS BY LOUIS MUHLSTOCK

REVIEWS

CANADIAN COMMENT

JOHN SUTHERLAND

NEW WRITING IN CANADA

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The Promotion of Mr. Prout

Allan Phillips

Mr. Prout woke with a nervous start. 7:02. Without hesitation he reached for the alarm, swung his feet in their warm wool bedsocks out in the chilly sober air, stood erect, seat in, chest out, hands upstretched: down! up! down! up! eight, nine, ten! bustled his flannel bathrobe round his plump breathless middle and patted it with satisfaction. Just right, he thought, just good firm flesh. Not fat, no fear of that. No skinny half-starved look about it either. Just right for forty-eight, could pass for forty-five. By George yes, easy. Less. Just as straight as when I went to France in '17. With firm deliberate caution Mr. Prout closed the window glancing all the while at Mrs. Prout still asleep, gathered up his clothes. the clock, and tiptoed out.

Past John's room. Sleeping soundly. Great boy that, thought Mr. Prout. Soon be old enough to join the Boy Scouts, learn to do the right thing there. What was that they taught us? know right, do right, see right. Maybe that was Sunday School. Teach him independence anyway, as the Honourable Mr. Brown said last night. Mr. Prout groped down the back stairs to the kitchen, warm, familiar-smelling, filled the kettle, lit the gas, pulled the blinds, turned on the steam, the radio, fixed the furnace, measured out the oatmeal, stirred it. Nothing like owning your own home, Mr. Prout thought, only way to know real independence.

The radio blared its sudden opening anthem. Mr. Prout poked his head inside the staircase: "Myrna! John! Seven-thirty!" then let the news march inside his head as he shaved.

"—and now the local news, Ottawa and district. Mr. Owen Struthers, Chief of the Canadian Government Bureau of Periodicals, passed away last night . . ."

Dried wisps of lather flew from Mr. Prout's face as he strode through the livingroom to the front stairs. "Myrna! Did you hear that?"

John came pattering barefooted to the bannister and hung down. "Does that mean you'll be promoted, dad? Will I get my bike now? . . ."

"John!" Mrs. Prout, majestic in long pink dressing gown, paddled John galloping back to his bedroom, and swept ponderously downstairs. "Well. It finally took him. My my my. Well, it's not as if we weren't expecting it." They moved toward the kitchen.

"You know, I'll miss old Mr. Struthers," Mr. Prout said. "There was a gentleman for you. Straight as a die. A straight back and a straight mind I always say. Minister or clerk, they were all the same to him. A real Christian, by George!" Mr. Prout bared his round pink-fleshed chin to the mirror. "Mind you, he could have handled correspondence better. No filing check, no check at all. In the army we kept four different carbons, say what you like, that's system."

"Well, you can't expect them all to have your training," Mrs. Prout said. "When will you take his job over, officially I mean?"

Mr. Prout deliberated between two brands of talcum. Mrs. Prout, glancing at him as she set the breakfast out, suddenly stopped short. "Willett! You're not going to stand there and tell me you don't think you're going to get the job."

"It doesn't look that way," Mr. Prout admitted slowly, intent upon the knot of his bowtie. "My guess is, one of these young chaps at Information will get it. Thick as thieves with the Deputy you know."

"After all these years," Mrs. Prout said bitterly.

Mr. Prout sat down heavily in his place at the tablehead. "Well, I can't deny I'm not disappointed either, Myrna. But there's things you wouldn't understand about it. Politics, you know."

"Politics fiddlefaddle. Crookedness, I call it!"

"No, you can't say that. No matter what, it's still the government. Politics, that's all it is."

Mrs. Prout banged down his porridge. "You let them off too easy, Willett! You know you had your heart set on that job. Why ten years ago Mr. Struthers told you he expected you to take his place some day."

"We might as well face facts," Mr. Prout said. "This new Ministry of Information is the big thing since the war. We go under them next month you know. They might even cut our staff."

"I don't see why you shouldn't get the 'job even so—" Mrs. Prout called with vigour up the stairs: "John! Breakfast! —There's no one I'm sure has a better record. Why you haven't been late to work in twenty years."

"It's not the same any more," Mr. Prout said. He poured milk on his porridge and watched the sugar vanish. "They want young chaps these days, with newspaper experience."

John came clattering, half-falling, down the back stairs. "Do I get my bike now, dad, do I?"

"Is that any way to come downstairs?" Mr. Prout said severely.

"What's all this about a bike?" Mrs. Prout asked.

"Well gee. Dad told me last year as soon as he got promoted I could have one."

Mrs. Prout looked at Mr. Prout significantly. Mr. Prout sat stiffly upright. "All this talk about promotion and Mr. Struthers not embalmed yet." Indignantly he spooned his porridge. Nothing like oatmeal to keep the blood warm, he thought, cheap too, one cent a plate it averaged out.

There was a thump on the front verandah. "I'll get it, dad." John scrambled up and out.

"You'll have to do something," Mrs. Prout hissed, "Take the money from the bank or something. You know how the boy looks up to you."

John came running back with the Morning News unfolded. "Look, dad, it's got your meeting last night in. It says: 'Information Minister cheered at Legion rally.' It's got some names in too. I don't see your name, dad."

"Let me see that," Mr. Prout said brusquely.

"Why were they cheering the Minister?" Mrs. Prout asked.

"The Honourable Mr. Brown? A man with cabinet status after all, you know, Myrna. He made them sit up too when he told them what we fought for. Independence, by George. And he's right too. Independence!" Mr. Prout clapped his hand down on the oilcloth.

"Mind the milk," Mrs. Prout said.

"—Rights and freedom of the individual! O he set us all to thinking, I can tell you."

"Do you know him, dad?" John asked.

"Well, I wouldn't say I know him well, mind you. But I've seen him at the Legion in the old days. Looks a bit like me. Not tall but well set up. Friendly chap, just like anybody else. I'm pretty sure I can remember speaking to him."

"John," Mrs. Prout said, "Go upstairs and clean your teeth before you leave for school,"

"—Now Willett," Mrs. Prout said firmly. "I'll tell you what

you're going to do. You're going to see the Minister this morning."

"See the Minister!" Mr. Prout stared incredulous across the ruins of breakfast.

"He used to belong to the Legion didn't he? You said how friendly he was. He might remember you."

"I couldn't be sure of that though."

"Well it isn't as if you were asking for anything not rightly yours. Surely he knows that."

"It isn't that, it's going over the Deputy's head. It could mean a transfer you know. The old Deputy now, I could talk to him, but this new chap is a last war man, he still has new ideas. They say he wasn't even satisfied with Mr. Struthers. I wouldn't want to get a transfer now, after twenty years."

"You go and see the Minister," Mrs. Prout insisted. "You stick up for yourself, Willett. What's the use of talking independence and not stick up for your rights?"

Mr. Prout struggled into his greatcoat. He tucked his brown wool muffler in, then halfkissed Mrs. Prout. "Here, none of that," Mrs. Prout said, "You do that right." Smiling Mr. Prout obeyed. He stepped across the doorsill, breathing deeply in the crisp air. "By George, I just might see him. I just might at that," he said.

"Morning, Mr. Prout," old Jim, the elevator man said, "Say, I sure was sorry to hear about Mr. Struthers. A real fine old man."

Mr. Prout nodded gravely, stepping into the cage. "One of the few, Jim."

Old Jim limped after him and clanged the iron grill door.

"Hard to think he won't be coming in anymore." He sighed. "Well, that's the way it goes, we all have to go some day I guess." He brought the car to a final shuddering halt. "Say, Mr. Prout, how'd you like that speech of the Minister's last night?"

"Well, I'll tell you," Mr. Prout said, stepping out, "More truth than poetry, Jim."

"That's right," old Jim called after him, "Everybody talking independence these days, don't know what it means." He stepped muttering back inside his cage; his steel door echoing emptily down the bare dingy hall, clashed in Mr. Prout's ear as he took the entrance stencilled black on frosted glass: Canadian Government Bureau of Periodicals.

Mr. Prout signed the book. For twenty years now, he thought, always he or Mr. Struthers came in first. Strange to think of him never again stepping quietly in, through the small reception wicket, looking first to see if Francois had closed the stockroom door, and if the mailing desk was tidy, and then peering around the elbow of the

hall to see how the editorial room was, and then stepping through to his big office with his name on, taking off his hat as he went by Miss Moran's desk; fifteen years she had done his typing for him. Mr. Prout walked slowly down the L-shaped corridor, past the editorial with the library opening off it to his hall's-end office. He viewed it with new insight. Not large, might call it small, but business-like, by George. Filing cabinet, bookcase, desk all in order; papers neatly stacked in basket, blotter clean, brass shined on plaque: J. Willett Prout, Chief Clerk. Mr. Prout sat down beneath a picture of the King. He could see the signing-in book from here.

The front door opened, closed. Quick high-heeled footsteps. Miss Moran. She wore black, even on her thin legs. Her sharp-featured face had a taut transparent look. Been crying, by George, never knew she could. The door slammed; Francois came rushing in, scribbled furiously, disappeared. Then Mrs. Abercrombie from the library, large, deliberate, dignified. A burst of chatter: the editorial clerks, all three together, signing hurriedly, glancing at the clock. One minute to and the whole staff on time. Mr. Struthers would have liked that.

Mr. Prout thumbed conscientiously through his papers. Nothing urgent. Now was the time to call for an appointment with the Minister. Through his window he saw sunlight on the brick wall opposite. Soon be spring, he thought. Like to see Myrna in a new hat this Easter. And John needs a suit. Should get the boy his bike too. Can't do it though, unless I get the job. Could get the fur coat then that Myrna's always wanted, now's the time of year to buy it. And paint the house, and put a hedge in, get some privacy. Mr. Prout lifted his receiver off its prong.

It wasn't proper procedure though, Mr. Prout thought. The Deputy wouldn't like it if he knew. Hate to get a transfer now, after twenty years; get used to strangers all over again, new work, loss of prestige. The Deputy could do it too. If they leave the job open this month, more than likely now, it will all come under him. No sense in carrying independence too far. Mr. Prout replaced the phone. He could see the sunlight fading on the brick wall opposite.

Footsteps sounded down the hall. Mr. Prout straightened, picked a voucher up and scanned it critically as Legion Secretary Arthur Keys peered in his door.

"Well, well," Mr. Prout called, "Come right in, Art." He laid his voucher aside and pushed forward a chair. "Never would have thought to see you here this morning, Art."

"No rest for the wicked, Bill." Art set his chair creaking as he settled his bulk with caution. He tweaked his red fleshy nose reflectively. "I'll tell you what it is, Bill. Vice-president Jenkins resigned

last night. His arthritis has got him pretty bad this time. I thought I'd touch each of you boys for a buck and see what we can do for him, eh?"

"Sure, sure," Mr. Prout took out his wallet. "That's too bad about old Jenkins, he did a fine job."

"The executive meeting is at four to elect an interim vice. I thought while we were at it we'd appoint a gift committee."

Mr. Prout laid down his dollar. "Where are we meeting this time, Art?"

"Well, it's like this, Bill," Art Keys looked down at Mr. Prout's dollar. "It's just elected and appointed officers, you know how it is."

"That's all right," Mr. Prout said with dignity, "I only wanted to do what I could, that's all."

"You'll hardly know what's what today, eh Bill?" Art Keys said quickly, "I hear your boss died last night."

"We can't let our personal feelings interfere with government business," Mr. Prout said quietly. "Pardon me a moment, Art— O Miss Moran!" he called. He signed a voucher with a proud JWP, then turned briskly back to Art.

Art reached absently for Mr. Prout's bill. Hands on fat knees pushed him upright. "I don't suppose they know who takes his place yet?"

"I'm afraid I'm not the one to comment," Mr. Prout said gravely. "Pardon me a moment, Art— Miss Moran, would you make an appointment with the Minister of Information sometime today for me, please?"

"Certainly, Mr. Prout," Miss Moran wrote it on her pad. "Any particular time?"

"At his convenience," Mr. Prout said casually, "Anytime at his convenience."

"Say Bill," Art said respectfully, "It's fairly certain, is it? You know what I mean."

"Sorry, Art, I'm afraid I can't discuss it. That's the Minister's prerogative, you know."

"Sure, sure, that's all right, I understand. Say Bill, when you're talking to the Minister, tell him how much we liked his speech last night. You might mention we'd appreciate having him out more."

"I'll put it up to him," Mr. Prout consented. He walked with Arthur Keys to the door. That will take him down a peg, Mr. Prout thought, show him who's important.

"Say Bill, I've been thinking . . . You're one of our real old members. What do you say I bring up your name for vice-president?"

"Well . . ." Mr. Prout said, "I always like to do what I can."

"That's the spirit," Arthur Keys said heartily, "All right, Bill, I'll call you later."

The Minister's anteroom felt cold to Mr. Prout. It was barren but for chairs, gradually filling. No reason to be nervous, Mr. Prout, waiting, thought. His personal secretary said she'd get me in. Miss Moran went to school with her she said. Mr. Browne would be about my age, a Legion man himself once. Mr. Browne, I'll tell him, Mr. Struthers died last night, I've been waiting twenty years for— No, doesn't sound good, put that way. Mr. Browne, experience counts. I've had twenty years experience on the job, find another man to say that. Couldn't either, he knows that. Think the Deputy would see to it, too young though, hasn't learned the way the government should run. Not good to go above his head all the same. Could mean a transfer. Mr. Prout shivered. Keep a cold room here he thought.

"Mr. Browne will see you now, Mr. Prout."

Mr. Prout rose stiffly and went in. Far down the vast room, windows rose from floor to ceiling, serving sunshine to the man behind the huge desk. Mr. Browne looked up at last. "Mr. Prout? Glad to know you." He put out a hand briefly. "Sit down. Too bad about your Chief. Fine old chap."

Mr. Prout was overwhelmed. His eyes welled tears, he blinked them back. "It was a blow, sir. Twenty years we were together."

"My sympathy, Mr. Prout. What can I do for you this morning?"

Mr. Prout felt his just and orderly facts eluding his tongue. He felt aggrieved. Mr. Browne's sympathy had cost him his preparation. "Well, sir, I've been running things in Mr. Struthers' absence, and I know things are going to change next month, and I haven't had newspaper experience of course, but I think twenty years should count for something!" Mr. Prout felt badly, this wasn't the way he had meant to say it at all.

Mr. Browne looked at Mr. Prout very frankly. "I understand perfectly, Mr. Prout. You may rest assured, however, that when the Ministry of Information takes over next month, the Bureau will retain most of its functions. Personnel changes of course will rest with the Deputy. But rest assured, Mr. Prout, long and conscientious service will receive consideration". Mr. Browne pressed a button on his desk.

Mr. Prout stood up. Gratitude shamed his resentment. "Thank you, Mr. Browne."

"Not at all," Mr. Browne said, "Anytime, Mr. Prout."

Mr. Browne's secretary on her way in, neatly sidestepped Mr. Prout going out. Mr. Browne returned her faint indulgent smile. "The party secretary called, Mr. Browne. He wouldn't wait. He said he just wanted to know if you had fixed 'that' up yet? He said you would know . . ."

"O Lord, yes," Mr. Browne groaned. He bowed his head to pudgy knuckles, rapped his forehead, jerked it up. "I've got it! Tell him it's taken care of. Get me Mr. Deevers first, and dig up a personal file on that chap that just left, what's his name?" He doodled thoughtfully, waiting.

Mr. Deevers came in briskly, a large, loose-tweeded, confidentially-mannered man, with a smoothly bald young head and cold eyes. "Great press on the Independence speech, Chief."

Mr. Browne nodded. "I had publicity go all out on it. Always remember, Gordon, the Legion can be your best friend or your worst enemy. Now, do you know a chap called Prout? Periodicals?"

"I think I've seen him with Struthers—small, heavy-set chap, looks as if he had a board up his back? I see old Struthers died last night."

"So my secretary said when she brought Prout in this morning. Gordon, you know the Information Department was created by order-in-council. Before the war, Periodicals was the nearest thing to it. Naturally there was a certain duplication of authority, and in practice Struthers referred to the Deputy. But technically, Gordon, Struthers was responsible to me. What I'm getting at, until Information takes over legally, I have power to appoint a new Bureau Chief who will actually have Deputy status for the next month."

Mr. Browne's secretary brought in a file. Mr. Browne leafed through it. "Sergeant in the first war. Married, one child. Recommendation for Chief Clerk: A man of sound integrity, dependable, conscientious. Fine, fine. A veteran, twenty years service, perfect record." He gave it back to his secretary. "Hurry it up and send it down to Publicity when you're through. Tell them to rush it out to the local papers today. —Gordon, I'm appointing Prout Chief of Periodicals."

"You're appointing Prout!"

Mr. Browne looked out his window. Clouds were gathering overhead. "Gordon, there's a by-election coming up in Border City. The biggest thorn in the party flesh there is a small political weekly called *The Independent*. Their man hasn't a chance, but they stand to do a lot of harm to ours. Now there's a law which gives the government right to issue an injunction against "any foreign publication not in the national interest". This paper has its printing done across the border, that makes it foreign, and one of our lawyers has dug up an old unsettled libel suit against it. That's grounds enough for an injunction till after election. The only local daily paper is with us all the way. If the others hear any squawks it will sound like the usual pre-election mud-slinging." Mr. Browne watched the people scurrying ant-like. "Now I don't like this, Gordon, but I can't afford bad feeling in the party just now. You know the Deputy, he'd never sign anything as obviously political as this. But until next month the Bureau still has its original powers. By noon, Prout's signature will be legal. I want you to take the paper over personally. Not that you'll have any trouble. He'll be so excited he won't know what he's signing." Mr. Browne smiled faintly. "If he does he'll take his orders, I know men. Make it clear, it means his job."

Mr. Prout frowned down on the green purity of his deskpad, then raised his eyes to meet the abstract kindly gaze of King George. He felt a vague disquiet. Should have gone home for lunch, he thought, shouldn't have broken routine today of all days. And never should have spoken to the Minister like that, practically told him what was what. And never should have mentioned newspaper experience, he may think I have it in for the Deputy. Puts me in a very bad position. Everyone in the office will know why I went. Whoever takes over will be sure to hear of it. And Art Keys will tell them all at the Legion I was counting on the job. They might even think I did it just to try to get elected. Puts me in a very bad position all around.

The phone rang.

"Canadian Government Bureau of Periodicals, Prout speaking."

"Just a moment, Mr Prout, Mr Deevers would like to speak to you."

Mr Prout clamped the receiver tightly to his ear. Knew I never should have gone to see the Minister he worried. Never should have listened to Myrna in the first place. It was all that Art Keys fault. He shifted grip on the phone. No, Mr Prout thought firmly, it wasn't

right and I knew it. Going over the Deputy's head. Whatever happens, it's— "Yes, Prout speaking."

"Oh Mr. Prout," Mr. Deevers' voice came thinly through the wire, "I wanted to be sure to catch you before you saw the papers."

"Papers?" Mr. Prout said nervously.

"The afternoon papers. With the news of your appointment. You're the Acting Chief of Periodicals as of this morning, Mr. Prout. . . Mr. Prout, did you hear me?"

"Yes . . . yes, I hear you, Mr. Deevers." Mr. Prout felt confused. "It's just . . . you've got to admit it's sudden, Mr Deevers."

"The Minister felt the Bureau shouldn't drift, Mr. Prout. Even for a day. We should have gotten your acceptance first, of course. But Mr. Browne felt he could depend on you. . . "

"Of course, of course," Mr. Prout said hurriedly. By George! he thought, well by George! J. W. Prout, Chief of Periodicals. "You can count on me every inch of the way, Mr. Deevers."

"I'm sure of that," Mr. Deevers' smooth thin voice said, "I'm sure Mr. Browne won't be disappointed in you. By the way, I have a paper that he wants signed this afternoon. I'll bring it over, I have a call to make at Health and Welfare right beside you. Say half-past three?"

"That's fine, Mr. Deevers." He hung up automatically. Well, by George! he thought, J. Willett Prout, Chief of the Canadian Government Bureau of Periodicals! On Mr. Struthers' door in large black print. Won't move in right away though, Mr. Prout thought, not respectful to the dead, in any case not dignified to hurry these things. Get them working on the painting and the hedge now though. Order Myrna's coat and surprise her. And John's suit. And the bike. Should ask them to deliver it Saturday when I'm home. Won't he be tickled. Bring him down and let him see the office with my name on. Might even buy a new car, watch the neighbours' eyes pop out. Mr. Prout clasped his hands behind his head and leaned well back . . .

Mr. Deevers was slightly late. His handshake held a limp suggestion of haste. "Congratulations, Mr. Prout. No more than to be expected of course. Now, I don't want to rush you, but the Minister is waiting for this paper . . . "

"Of course, of course," Mr. Prout picked up his straight-nibbed pen. "By George, I'm out of ink." He raised his voice. "Miss Moran!"

"Miss Moran," Mr. Prout said, "I wonder if you would mind bringing some ink."

"Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Prout," Miss Moran said, "The bottle's empty. 'I'll have to ask Francois to bring some from the storeroom.'"

Mr. Deevers looked annoyed. He checked his watch. "I'm due at Health and Welfare. Put it in an envelope when you've signed it, Mr. Prout, I'll be back in a few minutes."

"I'll have it waiting for you" Mr. Prout promised. These young chaps, he thought, always in a hurry, more haste the less speed. He contemplated the legal-looking paper to be signed. Look before you leap, Mr. Struthers used to say.

Francois rushed in with ink. He filled the well. "They tell me you're new boss now, eh, Mr. Prout? Good, eh? You know you can trust me, I know I can trust you. Good, eh?" He rushed out.

Fine boy, Francois, Mr. Prout thought, have to recommend him for an increase. Do right by other people and they'll do right by you, that's what Mr. Struthers used to say. He pondered the paper. The Deputy, he thought, he's the one that ought to sign this. The Minister must have his reasons though. All the same . . . The Minister wants it though. I guess it's safe enough, coming from him. Mr. Prout reached slowly for his pen.

Mrs. Abercrombie came sweeping in. She drew a deliberate deep-bosomed breath. "I only wanted to say what I told Miss Moran when we read it in the papers, Mr. Prout. Miss Moran, I said, we are most fortunate. We have another gentleman in charge of the Bureau. You will have my full support, Mr. Prout." Mrs. Abercrombie swept out.

Mr. Prout sat straighter in his chair. Very fine woman, Mrs. Abercrombie, know where you stand with her. Means something when she says that, makes you think twice alright. He stared down at his straight steel nib. The thing is, though, the Minister is waiting. Can't keep a Cabinet Minister waiting, one of the most important men in Ottawa, in the country, by George! It's his responsibility after all, the Minister takes the real responsibility. He wouldn't have me sign something that wasn't right, a man like that. Mr. Prout dipped his nib in the ink.

Miss Moran entered, hesitant and blushing. "It's just — I — I thought I'd like to tell you, Mr. Prout — I'm awfully glad you're taking over Mr. Struthers' job. I was just telling Mrs. Abercrombie, it's my proudest boast, all my life I've worked for men of very highest

principle." Miss Moran blushed again, turned and fled down the hall.

Wonderful woman, Mr. Prout thought warmly, never knew before she felt that way. He lifted his chin, met the direct and quizzical gaze of King George and dropped his eyes. After all, Mr. Prout thought, it isn't as if it mattered one way or the other what I do. If I don't sign it someone else will. No sense getting the Minister's back up for nothing. He might not have the Deputy confirm me next month. No sense throwing the job away for nothing, all these years—

He started nervously as Mr. Deevers strode in.

"Sorry, I was held up. Have to hurry I'm afraid. Have you got that paper ready, Mr. Prout?"

"I was just going to sign it, Mr. Deevers." Mr. Prout dipped his dried-up nib once again. I just do what I'm told, he thought. That's the only way to get along. Twenty years I've waited for my name on the door, hedge for the house, new car, coat for Myrna, bike for John, all the chaps at Legion saying, there goes J. Willett Prout, Chief of the Canadian Government Bureau of Periodicals. Have to think of Myrna and John, after all, man's first duty is to his family. Nothing to it anyway, just politics, just some little paper no one ever heard of getting independent, that's all. Mr. Prout clenched his pen.

Old Jim, the elevator man, came limping in.

"Sorry, Mr. Prout, didn't mean to butt in. Just going off duty when I heard. Guess the government knows an independent man when it sees one. Eh?" Old Jim nodded solemnly, first at Mr. Deevers, then at Mr. Prout. "Not enough people know what independence means. Why I can remember Mr. Struthers—"

"If you don't mind," said Mr. Deevers coldly, "We're rather in a hurry."

"Sorry," said old Jim hastily, "I didn't mean to butt in. Just wanted to say best of luck to Mr. Prout. All the same, Mr. Struthers would be glad to know you got it. He thought highly of you, Mr. Prout, don't you think he didn't." Old Jim nodded earnestly at Mr. Prout, defiantly at Mr. Deevers, then muttering to himself, limped out.

Mr. Prout blinked down at his stubby ink-smudged fingers. Years of pens and pencils rubbing against his second finger had raised an ugly callous on the joint. Your own fault, Mr. Prout, Mr. Struthers would often tell him, Should have learned right in the first place. He had not realized before how much he would miss Mr. Struthers. *He thought highly of you, Mr. Prout, don't you think he didn't.*

Mr. Prout laid down his pen. He raised his chin until he was meeting Mr. Deevers' chilly eyes.

"Sorry, Mr. Deevers, I can't sign this."

"What!" said Mr. Deevers incredulously. "It came direct from the Minister you know."

"I know, I'm sorry, Mr. Deevers." Mr. Prout felt miserable. He would have liked Mr. Deevers and Mr. Browne to understand. It wasn't that he didn't want to do as he was told. "I can't, that's all. Perhaps if I could have more information? . . ."

"Don't you think, Mr. Prout, as *Acting* Chief, your attitude is rather independent?"

Mr. Prout stiffened. "Maybe it is, Mr. Deevers. But I'm sure Mr. Browne will understand if you explain—"

"Don't worry, Mr. Prout, he'll understand perfectly!"

The phone rang.

"Canadian Government Bureau of Periodicals," Mr. Prout said. "O yes, Art . . . they did, eh? . . . they saw it in the papers? . . . well well, that's fine, Art . . . of course, of course, I always like to do what I can . . . thanks Art." Mr. Prout hung up. "Well, by George! They've elected me vice-president of the legion."

Mr. Deevers' lips distended promptly in a smile. He shook Mr. Prout's hand heartily. "A fine organization, Mr. Prout. A fine strong organization. As I was saying, the Minister will understand perfectly. It's too bad you don't see eye to eye with him, of course, but as you know, he'd be the last—"

"Of course, of course," Mr. Prout said. "That's just what I was saying. I knew that from the way he spoke last night. A great speech, Mr. Deevers. When you're talking to him, just mention that we'd appreciate having him out more."

"I'll do that, Mr. Prout. He thinks a great deal of the Legion. Good day, Mr. Prout."

Mr. Prout watched him striding down the hall. Queer chap, Mr. Prout thought, had me fooled a minute there. He sat musing into the smiling tolerant eyes of King George. Good thing I made up my mind to see the Minister, he thought, the Lord helps those who help themselves, as Mr. Struthers used to say. Too bad he's gone, a real old gentleman. From the library, stockroom, antechamber, a cheerful five-o'clock bustle rose. Miss Moran called, "Goodnight, Mr. Prout," then Mrs. Abercrombie, then Francois. Mr. Prout cleaned his desk, locked his drawers, checked his time. 5:08. Just time to make the 5:10.

Louis Muhlstock

Robert Ayre

When he was asked by the magazine *Chatelaine* a year ago to tell about the woman he most remembered, Louis Muhlstock chose a woman he had never met and who could not realize how much she had meant to him. He spoke of her "warmth and love of humanity", her "compassion and infinite pity for human destiny." She fought, he said, "for human dignity and against all those forces that degrade man and enslave. She fought for freedom, for peace, for bread. She was with the insulted and the injured . . . It is a woman like Kathe Kollwitz who can reconcile men like me to belonging to the human race."

A man is known by the company he keeps. In what he says of Kathe Kollwitz, Louis Muhlstock reveals his own character. He would be too modest, and too honest, to compare himself with her; he has been spared her bitter experience, he has not been called upon to be the great fighter she was; but he, too, in his personal life and in his art, is moved by sorrow and compassion, by love of his fellow creatures. If it were possible to distil a man into a word, I should say that Louis Muhlstock's word is *warmth*. It goes through all his human relationships, whether it be as a brother, an uncle or a friend; it shows itself in his kindly encouragement of younger painters, even the very youngest, the school children, who are learning not so much to paint as to see; in his practical sympathy with the unfortunate, and in his generous support of projects—such as those sponsored by the Federation of Canadian Artists—to bring art and the people, both of which he loves, closer together.

It is one of the outstanding qualities of his work. Muhlstock does not go as far as Kathe Kollwitz in depicting human tragedy. He does not give us little dramas of hunger, grief, desperation and death. He simply makes drawings of the suffering, the despised and the rejected, and lets them speak for themselves; but in his choice of subject—a charwoman on her knees, a derelict sleeping on the Mountain with his broken shoes on the grass beside him, a sick child, a demented woman, a newspaper seller in the street—he shows his compassion. His handling of them is delicate but firm and convincing, for not only

has he something to say, but he knows how to say it. Instinct and observation and the training of eye and hand in hundreds of drawings have made him one of the finest imaginative draftsmen in Canada. He brings the same skill and the same warmth to his studies of the nude and to his pictures of animals.

But this is not all of Louis Muhlstock. Anyone meeting him for the first time at his exhibition in the Montreal Art Association's gallery this winter would have come away with no more than a hint of the qualities I have mentioned. There he was, more than anything else, the pure lyrical painter, sensuously delighting in the earth and its atmosphere, in the shapes of its mountains and its trees, in the colours of its leaves and grass and flowers, in its lights and shadows, in its fecundity. You feel that there is sap in his trees, that the earth is alive for him, that in all its seasons and moods it is an experience worth having, and sharing. In other words, he paints the earth—and the sunny city streets, which have no undertone of bitterness, however poor they may be—with the warmth of affection.

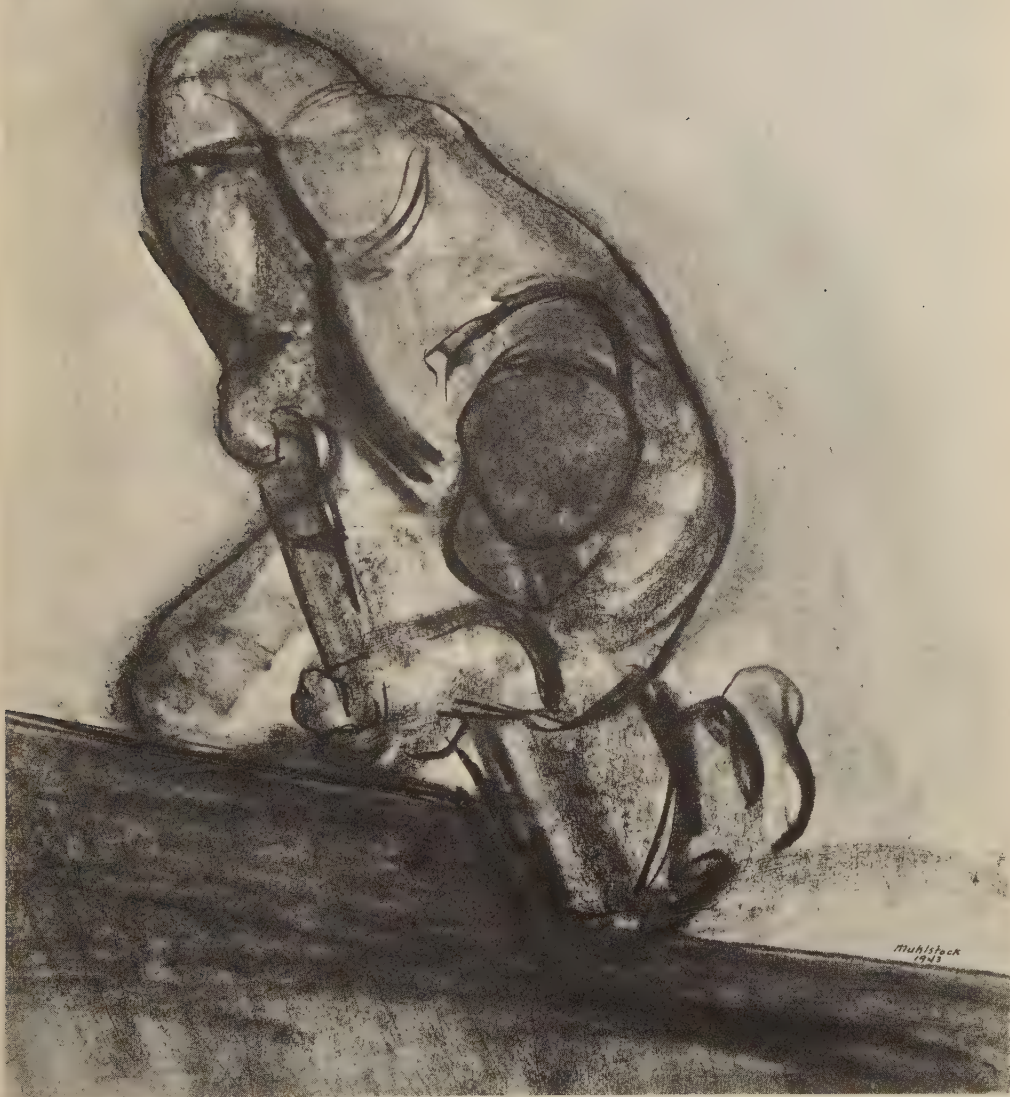
His concern for mankind, his pity and love, could not turn him into a man with a mission; they could not quench or divert his upgushing lyricism. He is a member of the human race, but as an artist he preaches no programme, follows no school. He goes his own individual, sensitive way. His art is a personal expression. His aims, according to a statement he made for the catalogue of Montreal paintings circulated in Western Canada and the Maritimes last year, are: "To continue to paint. To make a wholesome and substantial contribution to Canadian art with work that will have quality and be personal."

Louis Muhlstock was born in Galicia in 1904 and came to Canada when he was a child. After attending art classes in Montreal, he went back to Europe in 1928 and studied in Paris under Louis François Biloul until 1931. He is represented in the National Gallery of Canada, the Fine Arts Gallery of Montreal and the Quebec Provincial Museum, the Art Gallery of Toronto, the London Civic Gallery and a number of important private collections. He is a member of the Canadian Group of Painters, the Canadian Society of Graphic Art, the Contemporary Arts Society and the Federation of Canadian Artists.



Seated Nude. Collection Louis Muhlstöck





Chipper--United Shipyards. Collection Douglas Duncan.



ing on Mount Royal 1947

Collection National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Five Poems

Louis Dudek

To a Literary Patron

I once drank coffee at your sun-stained window,
Stirring around a plume of clouded cream,
While souls plummeted like stars into the river
And automobiles made swastikas on the green.

The palisades, reared by slow geological fury,
The bridge built by capital to carol for mankind,
Looked on in equanimity at your frail futility
In propping up the architectures of the mind.

Can we remember sunsets someone mentioned
Or anything whatever anybody said?
The symbols at the window sputtered louder,
As the mind plumbed the distances to things unsaid!

You urged me, later, I must try in earnest
And give my time attentively to—Art.
I knew the anger of the distant silences
Listened to the lappings of my guilty heart;

And said I would; and we drank tea or coffee;
The carvings on the table scattered ice;
And a little Jesus in a bed of amber
Grimaced at the spearpoints of electric lights.

Appendectomy

Beginning with an expert finger touching the abdomen,
The surgeon's certainty bows him to risk excision—
The glass doors of the hospital open to strange light;
Soon the patient is meek and waits for the razor of reason.

His animal protestations the murdering etherizer
Smothers, and leaves him senseless, at last relaxed;
Now he sleeps like a leaf on water, while a needle
Threads his insides, then closes the meaty track.

But part of his life was taken in the incision:
A retching mouth bewails the gash in his side;
Fever pouts his lips, he lies half-dead in the sand—
Two days of drought save him for a watery tide.

Morning! An early waking, and the warm washing basins;
Breakfast in bed, newspapers at his feet to scan.
The patient rises now, and feels his middle,
Totters two steps, a babe on the nurse's arm.

And so convalescence advances. Like a bird, at midday
He is hungry for the seeds of health, wise and made whole;
But he looks from the evening window at the social body
Where appendices and cysts perpetually explode.

Night Fire

Heralded by the clangorous fire wagon
And bells pealing loud in the awakened night,
Boys rush out in their white shirts calling
And voices drown in red and violent sound.

Feet flash on pavements, arms signal the air,
As the fiery bell peals forth cries of "Fire!"
And mothers shriek from windows, while the churning
Long black billows on the sidewalk roll.

The crowd is sucked down alleys and past corners,
Trips over tin, swoops and picks up stones—
A mob advances to a conflagration
Where bells and water congregate in flame.

Mesmerized as if by murder, men move watching,
Under cover, half afraid, and half proud;
Coils of the fire hose loop upward and tumble,
Twitching in black tortures and figure eights.

The smell of roofs, the odor of flesh burning,
Bite bitter at the senses aroused by death;
Mouths open, throats dry, eyes glass with dread
Fill with the fire burning through the night.

And the fire is a torch held in the night's darkness—
A frenzied joy, a fiesta, a feast of flame.
It is a blaze burning out a heavenly hole,
A hag of flame leaping and roaring hurrah.

Diamonds drip down on the floor and sputter,
Stairs fall feebly, a doorway, and now a steeple;
Burning the better for the ladders and snow water,
The flaming edifice opens its whitened jaws—

And whining, dies in the falling of walls and boards.
 The men in rubber do their duty with loud axes;
 An ice-cold river finishes the fieriest coal.
 It is all over now. The sour ashes are moistened,

And the last sparks fly to the tongue-thickening smoke.
 In a white vapour, the ruins rise in the dawn,
 Raising charred bones of love to the dying stars
 That go down westward, blue, in their black orbits.

Street Lamp

How like a moon the ugly street lamp shines
 through the wet tree and its sinuous branches!
 Water drops wink like stars in the green light
 and twigs make a web of lights in the night air,
 as white as the Milky Way, as thick, as tenuous,
 and as far away. So the eye, seeing it, makes
 of a metal universe spinning over traffic—
 stars, satellites, and galaxies! And the heavens
 of moons, craters, iron suns, and screaming fire,
 become the sky we know, which is a shining jewel.
 But we have torn through the deceptions quickening desire
 to the underworlds of fact that no eye can gild,
 or love, and our own blood glistens on the branches.

Les Innocents

Clarissa in her light blue dress
Walks down Prince Street in the morning;
The boys with the braided legs look at her
Sticky dress in the breeze as she goes by.

Clarissa is the saint of Prince Street,
She goes to church, and she bakes pies;
But the boys look at her as though she were naked—
And yet they are not bad boys at all.

For the boys themselves are the sons of saints
Who got decently married when their time came;
And Clarissa, also, will soon be a mother
By one of the boys with the most unholy eyes.

I Have Confused the Feeling

Colleen Thibaudeau

I have confused the feeling
Though should know as right as rain
That from this slowtrain window I have seen
A previous pass of plain;

Unquiet as hair on nib or the poised drill,
And does no good to strain
The landskip countenance to divine
What the unreasoning season won't explain—
What eyes looked asters into mine.

As though they'd laid a pleasing anxious hand on time
And made it spin
Till where I'd been and whither to have gone
One in the whirling one in the wheeling
Iron of the sun;

I have confused the feeling
Though should know as right as rain
That from this slowtrain window I have been
In that slowpassing plain.

Film

Guy Glover

On Film Criticism and on Two Recent Canadian Films

A large proportion of those whose job it is to comment on movies must feel much as I do about the Hollywood product (which, in spite of foreign imports, is still the main staple of our movie diet), but they solve their difficulty in a different way: they write something, but they do not write movie criticism. Faced, week after week and month after month, with monotonously unrewarding material, many of the regular movie critics have sought refuge in laughter, and the best of these have become accomplished humourists. Some of the most adroit and entertaining contemporary journalism has sprung from this kind of activity. Other supposed critics, shunning the role of jester, have felt constrained to adopt the puritanical guises of Sociologist, Political Expert, Psychologist, etc., and have written quantities of solemn and erudite words on our entertainment films. I am not convinced, however, that their solemnity is often more apposite than the hilarity of their confrères.

I would not complain too bitterly about this (namely, that something which is not movie criticism is written in the name of movie criticism about thousands of worthless movies), were it not for the fact that, when a movie comes along which is obviously good (even from Hollywood, which can make happy blunders), the critics-we-all-have-to-read treat it precisely as they treat all the bad films: that is to say, although they may in this instance assure us it is excellent, they eschew discussion of those points which actually are the only ones which can be adduced in explanation of the film's quality.

In other words, the failure of most contemporary movie criticism is the failure, while emphasizing personalities and subject-matter, to examine the aesthetic and technical elements by means of which

the subject-matter is presented. This is a little (to use a kitchen simile) like judging the merits of an eaten cake without showing any curiosity about its ingredients or the procedure adopted up to, and including, its baking. However, it is one thing to criticize, another oneself to go and sin no more.

I may know (or think I know) what "good" movie criticism should be; and I may know which elements in a film should be examined the better to demonstrate its quality as an experience of more than mere passing interest. In practice, however, I have found it almost useless to refer to these elements in discussing a movie for someone who himself has not given some consideration as to what exactly a moving-picture is, and who himself has not learned some of the basic principles upon which the cinema, as an art, is based. There is the difficulty. For, although criticism may teach to a certain extent, to perform its proper work it must *assume* a known body of principles, the teaching of which already has occurred—somehow, somewhere. I am uncomfortably certain that, writing movie criticism in North America today, I am entitled to no such assumption of principles.

If I wish, therefore, to persist in my critical efforts, I must avail myself of some sort of compromise. I propose attempting one such compromise in these pages from now on,—by minimizing discussions of subject-matter, and by emphasizing those on Form, Photography, Montage, Optical Effects and Sound, since I consider these to be the very stuff of Film and as such of prime critical concern. I shall try not to fall into mere film jargon in discussing these points, but when obscurities occur, as they are bound to, my suggestion is that the reader seek clarification in the literature on the Film. Since this literature is fascinating I need not apologize for having sent anyone to it.

In an earlier article two Canadian feature films were mentioned briefly. Both were failures even on their own terms, i. e. as "B Pictures". If you have seen them you know that their stories were silly; their dialogue, strictly pulp; their direction, untalented; their acting, mostly lack-lustre when it was not downright feeble; their photography and montage, routine to the point of boredom. They were produced, evidently, by persons who, themselves lacking talent, had, moreover, not even business sense enough to hire talented collaborators. For all this not much excuse can be found.

Those two films alone represent Canadian feature film production during recent years; and if Canada's movie reputation rested on

them it would deserve nothing but ashamed silence. Fortunately, however, production of another kind has put Canada on the world movie-map, and of this any Canadian might justifiably feel proud.

Since 1939, the National Film Board of Canada, the official Government film agency, has produced a large and steady flow of short moving pictures. Most of these have been shown widely across the country and around the world, and shown with great success. But although many people for many reasons have thought highly of the NFB films, few, I wager, have realized just how much creative imagination and patience have been demanded of the Film Board's craftsmen in solving the problem of presenting difficult (i.e. cinematically-unlikely) subjects on the screen. The Film Board, by virtue of its function as defined under the Film Act, has had to deal largely with factual material (with only occasional opportunities to flirt with Glamour), but it has learned to exploit the inherent cinematic qualities and interest of its subjects—from raising seed-potatoes to children's art, from model water-supply to Canada's role in international affairs. Let me be clear on this: in a civilization where "film" means "feature film" (and "subject" means Love, Adventure and Marlene Dietrich), nothing short of a revolution will reveal the cinematic possibilities of a potato. The workers at the National Film Board have had to effect that revolution in themselves first, and later in their audiences.

Without vitality, an art will deteriorate, and if it deteriorates its subject-matter will not get across adequately. If, therefore, you are concerned with getting across your subject-matter you pay attention to the art with which you present it. Of itself, the unfailing worthiness or excellence of subject-matter is no guarantee of the vitality of an art,—although many act as if it were. Certainly in film-making the worthiness of the subject has been allowed often to excuse technical and artistic inadequacies. This tendency the Film Board, with its range of subjects almost totally of one hundred percent virtue, has had to face in a particularly extended form. How has it succeeded?

Let us take a look at two recent Film Board productions as they relate to cinematic art, and let us assume the intrinsic worth of their subjects.

(1) "The Feeling of Hostility" (1948) produced and directed by Robert Anderson, is the second in the series "Mental Mechanisms" sponsored by the Department of National Health and Welfare, in technical collaboration with the Allan Memorial Institute of Psychiatry of McGill University and the Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal.

The series is designed for use in group therapy treatment work, but it has considerable interest for the layman.

"The Feeling of Hostility", which is 32 minutes long, presents its subject in narrative form, using dialogue, commentary, sound effects and music. The various stages in the development of the main character towards neurosis are shown by choosing key incidents in those stages. I presume some difficulty was encountered in finding pieces of action which were at the same time dramatically probable, scientifically correct and cinematically eloquent. But on the whole, in finding physical equivalents (overt action and dialogue) of mental states, the script-writers and director have been very successful.

Taking the individual expressive incidents, which he photographed more or less realistically, the director has put them together in a stylized structure. This stylization was made necessary by the total length of the film (decided, in advance, by budgetary and other considerations), and made necessary too by the comment to be made on, and by, the action—a comment of a purely didactic kind. This structure, or form, makes free use of time-compressions (in the ordinary sense), and of action-compressions (of course only another form of time-compression). Such compression, or telescoping, is usual in most story-films, but here it is used with a considerable degree of complexity, but always clearly. It is also functional. By this I mean that the complex time element is not imposed on the material to make it interesting (as is often the case), but, on the contrary, grows out of it.

The principle of montage in "The Feeling of Hostility" plays its part not so much in the way individual shots are assembled, as in the way the larger chunks, the sequences themselves, are related. The montage is of the most orderly kind. The device of the "dissolve" is used within sections to compress time and action, and to introduce the "flash-back" material. The familiar "fade" (—out, and—in) is used to indicate longer time-lapses (typically those separating the different age-periods in which the main character is shown, from early childhood to maturity). The misuse of these "optical effects" is the mark of the "illiterate" film-maker, and is very common. In this film they are used meticulously. Throughout, in fact, the film maintains very high technical standards.

Apart from a few lapses in the acting itself, and in spite of a final scene which is perhaps not enough visually significant, "The Feeling of Hostility" is, by a long shot, the most mature and the best realized of any Canadian film I have seen.

Its functional merit is high, and it is high because the subject

has been presented with an affectionate regard for the art of the film.

"Horizons du Quebec" (1948), produced by James Beveridge and directed by Bernard Devlin, is an entirely different kind of picture. It undertakes, in 31 minutes, to synthesize French-Canada—its history and its sociological, economic and cultural development, up to the present day. How to view this vast panorama so that it yields up meaning is a formidable conceptual problem; how to visualize it on film is even more formidable. It is not surprising, therefore, that "Horizons du Quebec" is not the perfect success that "The Feeling of Hostility" is.

Devlin, a young director of entirely Canadian training and experience, in attempting his difficult assignment, has made glaring errors—of taste, judgment and craftsmanship—but, despite these, he has kept the film art alive, and has created several passages of great interest and beauty.

"Horizons du Quebec" falls roughly into four sections:

(1) A prologue in which a comic American tourist is seen reacting to the French Canadian scene. A sub-prologue discovers the tourist lecturing with lantern slides to his club. He makes stupid remarks about Quebec, and is interrupted by the commentor. The main part of the film then begins. This prologue is in disastrous bad taste; is badly directed, badly acted, as well as a rag-bag of cinema clichés. One could not well think of a more catastrophic opening for a movie.

(2) The early history of French Canada (discovery, colonization, conquest) realized through the use of models, statuary, paintings, period prints and other graphic material. This is ingeniously and excitingly handled, and does its difficult job very well. Nobody but a *young* film director would have had the nerve to attempt it—but innocence has its rewards even in the film business.

(2a) A description of the French Canadian way of life: the family, the church, the farm, the school. The growth of population is shown as it affects the using up of tillable land along the St. Lawrence; and the resulting migrations to the U. S. and the cities. This again is presented chiefly by diagrammatic, animated pictorial material, although it is in this section that the director has pulled off one of his unthinkably hazardous conceptions. He has dared to present, in a mere handful of shots, (in live photography—i. e. not diagrams), the life of a typical habitant of the last century. (One day we are born; we go to school, we go courting; we get married; one day we die.) This he manages with absolute success and considerable poignancy.

(3) The industrial development of French Canada. How the

typical immigrant from the farm fits into the industrial scheme. This is handled in an old-fashioned "expressionistic" style, using a variety of complicated film devices to compress its ideas. It, too, makes its points with admirable economy and fine visual effect.

(4) The cities become overcrowded; conditions become bad for the urban workers. The idea of immigration to undeveloped parts of the province is introduced. Here the film abruptly changes style, dropping its "type" characters and rigid stylization, and adopting a loose editorial manner (the manner, not the looseness, somewhat reminiscent of the "Canada Carries On" and "World In Action" series circa 1942). A rapid survey is made of the industrial potential of the Quebec hinterland. The film slews awkwardly round to a cursory glance at contemporary cultural developments in Quebec and ends in a mist of generalities, looking in no respect like the film it started out to be.

Two-thirds of "Horizons du Quebec" are exciting and unique. In them a young and talented director has created a complex yet naive, a skilful yet fresh, tissue of visual experiences. This is native cinema at its most interesting and most promising.

Canadian Comment

In his recent book, *The Ill-Tempered Lover and Other Poems*,* L. A. MacKay diagnoses the state of Canadian poetry in these terms:

The Critic, Sir, the Critic is to blame
Who with insulting clemency misuses
One rule for home, and one for foreign, muses.

There should be no quarrel with this opinion of Canadian Criticism or the tone of contempt in which it is expressed. Our critics are insulting in their kindness and complacency—insulting is the proper word—and we must say so as often and plainly as we can in the hope of shaming them into a semblance of honesty. I believe MacKay, in satirizing the deficiencies of our poetry, is more than justified in placing the final blame on the critic; and I think he is especially to be commended, because we have a tendency to view Canadian criticism and Canadian poetry as two separate and unrelated entities, and to deny altogether the effect of critical opinion on the development of our poetry. We should not suppose because we have no significant criticism, that there are not certain critical attitudes, focused in the writings of our critics, that exert a pervasive influence.

There is, however, an ambiguity in the above quotation, in the word "misuse", which leaves the last line open to two interpretations. Does this line mean that the critic wrongfully assumes the existence of two rules, or that there are two rules which he misuses in application? Perhaps we cannot doubt that MacKay intends the first meaning—there is, and can be, only one rule; but the alternative is there, and it suggests a corollary that would, I believe, meet with his approval. There is only one rule, but there must be a Canadian critical approach. I do not mean that we must always view the Canadian poet in explicitly Canadian terms—though that may be mandatory with many poets—but rather that the critic must come to accept a self-critical Canadianism as a basic, if perhaps unspoken, premise of his thinking. This is the point I should like to develop in this comment, with the guidance of MacKay's satires on Canada and on Canadian

**The Ill-Tempered Lover and Other Poems*, by L. A. MacKay. MacMillan's Ltd., Toronto. 72 pages. \$2.00.

literature.

At the conclusion of "And Spoil the Child", the satire quoted from above, we find this little epitaph:

... Perchance some day a traveller will pass
Where, stumbling through the weedy grass
A little dingy fallen stone he'll see,
And read, "Here lies Canadian Poetry:
Died, in a Hospital for Paralytics,
Smother'd in kindness by complacent critics."

These lines are about one part prophetic fantasy to nine parts accurate description of what is happening every day. It is happening—has happened, in fact—during the nineteen forties. Those who observed the "development" of the Canadian poetry of the forties, who saw it flourish on critical indifference, and then melt away as fast as its reputation grew, will conclude that there is nothing more deadly than the kindness of literary opinion in Canada. At the first kindly touch of "authoritative" criticism, the "new movement" literally succumbed to paralysis: thereafter only the hardiest writers were able even to move. We cannot learn that the first axiom of criticism is honest interpretation. In the past, we sought to hide our dishonesty under the guise of a so-called Canadianism—in reality a colonialism that respected only British imitation and mistook the success of the mere imitation for that of its model. Today, our critics have found a curious and far more effective disguise: everywhere in Canada we hear it said that the national question does not matter and that the important thing is to understand and evaluate Canadian literature in international terms. It is a worthy ideal falsified by its application. We may safely say that, in the name of cosmopolitanism, a propagation of Canadian literature is taking place, without valid basis and on a scale never dreamed of by the exponents of colonialism. Professing their distrust of nationalism, our critics are actually in the position of that parrot appearing in an advertisement for Corby's whiskey, who is made to say: "Canada is a great country! Be proud you are a Canadian!" They are, indeed, very much like this parrot, our national bird of the moment. They don't repeat its slogans aloud, but then they don't need to: they have incorporated them in their point of view at the outset. For this perpetual assertion that we must consider Canadian literature in cosmopolitan terms, automatically includes the assumption that Canadian literature has an international status and exists on a footing with international culture. It is, I repeat, the most effective disguise so far found for unthinking Canadianism. It is, in fact, a perpetuation in a new form of that colonialism

for which it professes such scorn.

There is an alternative both to the old and the new colonialism: a sincere and forthright Canadianism such as is now everywhere at a premium. It is only through a greater understanding of Canadian literature, and, above all, through our concern with the growth of its individuality, that we shall make a beginning in criticism in Canada. Only through an increased national self-respect, such as this understanding and concern necessarily entail, will we have the courage to cast aside our complacency and to judge what is good and bad in ourselves. A self-critical Canadianism provides the best guarantee that MacKay's "one rule" will be observed, and indeed is a prerequisite of any genuine cosmopolitanism. It should not involve an anti-British attitude: rather it should enable us to understand and appreciate the relationship between Canadian and British poetry as we do not now. Only when we accept national identity as the goal, and have the will to decry mere dependence on Britain, will we be able to say wherein the British tradition is most valuable to us.

There is no better illustration of the truth that cosmopolitanism presupposes a self-critical Canadianism than the writing of L. A. MacKay. It is illustrated by the criticism and reviews that he has contributed to Canadian magazines, and especially by the satires in the Canadian section of "The Ill-Tempered Lover". In these satires he is as critical of a mere blustering nationalism, that hides its weakness with criticism of what is non-Canadian, as he is insistent that we stand on our own feet and "know our own minds". This is the main theme of "And Spoil the Child" ("We see thee rise, the true North, free and strong/But where the truth or freedom in thy song?"), and the theme of the long satire on our political and spiritual life, *Fidera Vulnera Amici*:

What of a Beaver then, with budding mane
That still he coaxes and pomades in vain,
While fluffy feathers, the uncivil things,
Insist to clothe his flapping paws in wings;
Who ponders on his own ambiguous tail,
Is that a tuft, a feather, or a scale?"
And like some baffling beast that dies in dreams,
Roars like a Lion, like an Eagle screams?
Thrice happy beast, if he could ever find
A way to know, or guess at, his own mind.

Faithful as he is to this simple, but most difficult, principle, that we know our own minds, MacKay is able to approach Canadian life with a vigour and forthrightness that I, for one, have not encoun-

tered elsewhere. If it were possible to save only these poems in this section of "The Ill-Tempered Lover" I would gladly return the rest of our literary criticism to the ash-can from which it was pilfered.

"The Ill-Tempered Lover" as a whole seems to me of less significance and value than these satires. It does contain other good poems—"The Next Armies" and "Polyphemus Maddened" for example—and it is marked by intelligence, and often by technical skill, but I would not say that it represents successful poetry. To the question which MacKay asks with such unique honesty in "And Spoil The Child"—"Shall I not / Give back as ponderous verse as e'er I got?"—the poems sometimes answer in the affirmative. They can be ponderous, and tentative at times, and doubtless the reason is that MacKay, although he has many good things to say, and many ways of saying them, has nothing to say that is quite his own, or at least no individual way of saying it. We might make a similar criticism of the poems on Canadian themes with one important reservation. He has not found an individual manner in those satires, but he has found a theme of unique and urgent significance in Canada. There he is unquestionably the pioneer, engaged in breaking virtually new ground. Others have occasionally satirized the Canadian scene, but never with the same vigour and sure-sighted purpose of MacKay. Three of these poems stand out: "Frankie Went Down To The Corner" (satirizing the liquor laws in Ontario), "Some Men There Are" (a take-off on the culture-snob), "I Dreamt That Gabriel" and "The Raven Himself Is Hoarse" (both satirizing Canadian letters). They are the type of poem that anthologists usually welcome with sighs of relief, but they have not been included in Canadian anthologies for obvious reasons.

MacKay makes several important criticisms of our literature in these Canadian poems. Not least in significance is his charge that we lack a sense of humour. We are certainly too solemn, and never more so than in our attempts at humour. Stephen Leacock is the one notable exception. There are many lessons to be learned from the great humourist, and two of the most valuable are these: that literary lapses are a sign of creative health; and that many of our literary solemnities are really literary lapses (Sir Charles Roberts, among others, being a great unconscious humourist who could never quite say, "I would rather be a clown than a saint"). MacKay is teaching the first lesson in "I Dreamt That Gabriel"—"But the Canadian Forum would not smile"—where The Canadian Forum magazine is an effective symbol for Canadian letters. He comes to the second lesson in an apostrophe to the Canadian poets called "The Raven Himself Is

Hoarse" (this engagingly frank raven is L. A. MacKay):

Ye pretty bird-wits, prattling in the twigs,
At each twig's end an Infinite Ecstasy
Bobbling and bouncing—twee—twee-twee—twee-twee—
Pox on your pipings! Listen to the pigs.
Four feet on earth, they stalk their sober way,
And speak, when they have found a thing to say.

We are too solemn: besides, we are always solemn about the wrong thing. We are forever losing our perspective and our sense of humour for the sake of the Infinite Ecstasy, the whopping big abstraction—the moral or the religious or the political or the psychological abstraction. When we are tempted by the abstraction, we invariably forget the cardinal rule of all writing—to "speak when we have found a thing to say". We also forget that we stand on the ground on our two feet and occasionally go down on it on all fours: we lose that self-awareness which, however devious its expression, is likewise a cardinal element in all writing.

An insistence on self-awareness is the burden of MacKay's criticism. The criticism has been suggested earlier in these remarks by a quotation from the satire on Canadian politics—"Thrice happy beast if he could ever find/A way to know, or guess at, his own mind"—the moral being that self-awareness and a genuine national awareness are two sides of the same coin and that we cannot have the one without the other. Let us notice that MacKay is not merely saying that we fail to be honest and intelligent about ourselves; but also that, lacking self-intelligence, in a very real sense we lack selves. He has made this clear in "And Spoil the Child":

"But, but . . .", you say, "But, but . . ." But me no buts.

The one thing that our poets need is guts.

We lack the guts to "think sternly", but this amounts to saying that we *lack guts*—heart and vitals. We shall never have the guts for the art of poetry—the direct or indirect expression of the passionate self—until we have the courage to face and know the self. It has been our habit to embrace the big abstraction, from a puritan fear of the self or a need to compensate for own lack of size. We are surely not devoid of passion, but we have funnelled the passion away in vaporous abstractions.

There is, therefore, a demand in Canadian poetry (and Canadian writing) for the qualities which come with self-awareness—the qualities that distinguish MacKay's best satires: order, clarity and precision. The Canadian poet, whose heaven is the romantic abstraction, must be brought down to earth and taught to walk before he

tries to fly. He cannot, however, learn to walk before he learns to "think more sternly": he lacks, above all, the critical intelligence. But, while the poet is at fault, it is impossible that our poetry should alter to any sensible degree, until such an intelligence manifests itself in Canadian literary opinion as a whole, and until this opinion is sufficiently concerned with the growth of a Canadian identity to examine our literature with critical and self-critical eyes. "The Critic, Sir, the Critic is to blame." So give the poet hell, but lay into the "critic"—and this "critic" too—with all your might.

John Sutherland

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